

YOUTH NEWSLETTER

LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION/YOUTH DESK

No. 23 November 1987



Indian delegation to Asian Lutheran Youth Gathering conducting a devotion

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E D I T O R I A L

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"Everything is permissible" - but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible" - but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others. (1 Corinthians 10, 23-24)

The question "how?" is very often a crucial one.

We know what to do because we can clearly see the needs of the world around us. We are aware of the needs because our eyes have been sensitized through the Holy Spirit to distinguish between good and bad based on a broad scale of possibilities. We sharpen our sight through reading the Bible and listening to the witnesses of sisters and brothers in the community of believers and thereby we learn to hate evil behaviour and love those who sometimes do not even know what wrong they cause and we learn to admire justice and peace of the highest possible standard. We know what is good and what is bad in our personal life, in the function of the church and in the cooperation between the countries of this world. And we know that we have to be engaged in trying to solve the problems. We cannot just watch and criticize, suggesting solutions for others, giving clear although difficult advice concerning other people's responsibilities; we have to be active and contribute.

And, therefore, the question arises: how to do that? What ways and tools can I use?

This issue would like to give some of the possible answers as groups of young people, part of our international youth program, have tried to phrase them. This happened recently during two main activities of our Youth Desk: the Asian Lutheran Youth Gathering in Jerusalem and the Seminar of European Lutheran youth on "Our Quest for Spirituality" in Rättvik, Sweden. In spite of the fact that both of these activities had different objectives and forms and that the very different backgrounds of the participants was reflected in them, there was one common feature.

When assuming our responsibility for one another in the church and society we are asking: how could our services be received in the best way? How can we be the most beneficial? From what sources should we take our power? How can we make use of the rich heritage of the different cultures for the Christian witness through words and deeds? What could be seen as a gift of God for mankind and, therefore, good enough also for Christians and what should be understood as a tool of a foreign nature competing with the objectives of the Spirit of love which was given to us?

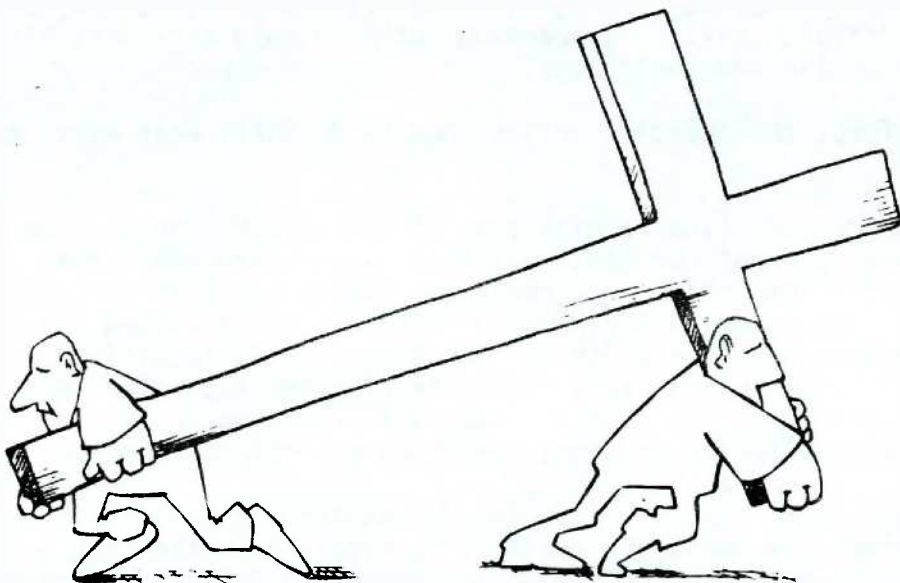
We would like to be as useful as possible. Therefore we would like to make use of as many cultural, spiritual, ethical values, methods and approaches as possible. At the same time we realize that some of the genuine Christian sources of improvement given from God to the church of Jesus Christ were neglected or hidden from the eyes of the young members of our churches, who are naturally looking for thrilling, new, unused and undiscovered ways in order to be innovative and really young in all parts of their being.

Therefore we come to the question: "how?" concerning our service. We have been given the freedom to try, to judge everything as the apostle Paul says to the Christians in Corinth. In this trying, judging and questioning we should be led by the following criteria given to us in the Bible:

How beneficial? How constructive? How to serve others and not our own good? Maybe you would say: these questions don't make it any easier... and there are still several other pieces of advice which the Bible gives us in order to stimulate our discussions - the personal ones and the collective or global ones. How shall we transfer them into our decision making process and into our action?

Let's try to compare our own answers to the question: How should our witness be? with those represented in this issue of our Youth Newsletter.

Yours,
Julius



NOTES FROM OUR DESK

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From the past events at our desk:

The Youth Desk organized the following activities since June 1987:

1. The Asian Lutheran Youth Gathering in Jerusalem on August 2-16, 1987 with about 65 participants (there is a report in this issue and a comprehensive collection of the materials produced and used by the meeting can be requested from our desk);
2. A European Seminar of the Lutheran youth on the theme "Our Quest for Spirituality" was held in Rättvik, Sweden, on August 23-31, 1987 with 23 participants (a report follows in this issue).

The Youth Desk was represented by the coordinator at:

- a meeting of the Youth Committee of the LWF German National Committee, which took place in Ludwigshafen, FRG, on September 19-20, 1987.

Coming activities:

1. A Caribbean Lutheran Youth Gathering will be held in conjunction with the Caribbean Lutheran Congress in Puerto Rico on November 8-13, 1987 with about 20 participants;
2. An African Lutheran Youth Leaders Conference is planned for May 10-21, 1988 in Zimbabwe with about 40 participants and with a visitation program to neighboring countries;
3. A European Lutheran Youth Meeting is planned for Bratislava, Czechoslovakia for June 19-26, 1988 with about 60 participants.

Youth Internship in the LWF Headquarters:

The following interns have been selected for the indicated department and period:

- Ms. Gisela von Heusinger (FRG) for the Women Desk in the Department of Studies and the Information Bureau of the Department of Communication for the period of December 1987 - June 1988;
- Ms. Maria Nordström (Sweden) for the Youth Desk in the Department of Church Cooperation for the period January - June, 1988.

New internship programs (end of 1988 and 1989) will be related to the preparation of the next LWF Assembly and the Pre-Assembly Youth Gathering. Interns, preferably with Latin American, African and Eastern European background (domicile or experiences) would be considered. The guidelines as announced in the last issue of the Youth Newsletter are still valid. We will inform you of the deadline for these applications in the next issue.

R E P O R T

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"Lutheran Youth Witnessing Christ in Asia"

was the theme of the Asian Lutheran Youth Gathering, one of the recent activities of the LWF Youth Desk. It was organized together with the host church: the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan, and especially its Youth Committee. It took place in the Talitha Kumi Evangelical school in Beit Jala on August 2-16, 1987.

We would like to give you some data about this very important meeting:

Who participated? We were about 65 in a good male/female balance, representatives of the LWF member churches in Asia and other regions of the federation (e.g. Africa, North America, Europe), of the World Council of Churches and of course a large and friendly group of Palestinians - the youth of our host church, who had prepared a wonderful atmosphere for the meeting. Everyone who applied for a visa was allowed to the country and attend the conference.



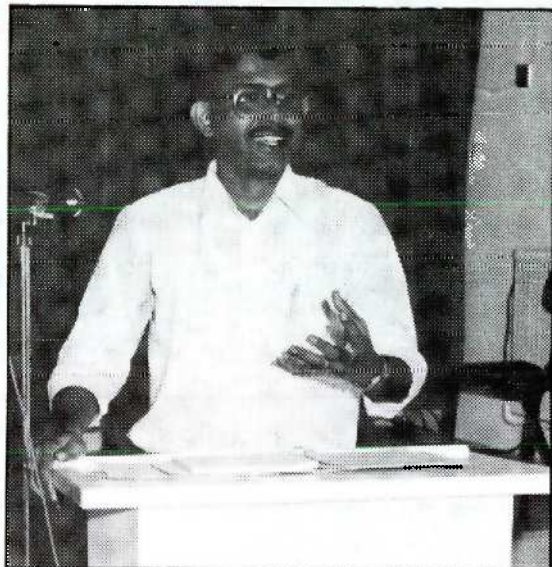
Part of participants during cultural evening

Why in Palestine? It was because of the strong desire of the host church, especially with regard to their youth work, to have this unique opportunity to be connected with the community of Lutheran churches in the world and to show some of the hopes in their difficult situation of being in a territory under occupation by the state of Israel for more than 20 years. At the same time it was held in Palestine also because of the urgent need of the LWF to show its interest and support for the life and mission of this Church in their situation. But it was also because of the unique heritage of the Palestinian Christians and their ministry; a church which can be our link to the roots of the Christian faith in the land where our Lord Jesus Christ lived, taught, healed and was crucified and resurrected.

What was on the program? As we wanted to learn from one another as much as possible, we had reports from the participating churches' youth work and reports from Palestine on the life of the church as well as on the peace and human rights issues in the country. We had very interesting Bible reflections made by participants and contributions to the theme of the conference: (Dr. Paul Rajashekar, India: Challenges of the Asian context; Rev. Wilando Roa, the Philippines: Witness to the Gospel; Mrs. Esther Tse, Hong Kong: Witness through the Social Work of the Churches; Rev. Munib Younan, Palestine: Witness in the Political Engagement). The reports from the other regions of the LWF as well as many informal and late night discussions together with social, cultural activities, an extensive visitation program in the country and lots of prayers and singing helped the group to grow together into a sensitive family. It was a pleasure to see the signs of this on different occasions.



Aida Haddad (of the ELCJ), Vice-president of LWF, addressed the gathering in the opening plenary



Paul Rajashekar



What about some of the fruits of the meeting? Some of those for which we can account follow this short introduction (one of the Bible studies, the Final Statement and a Letter to the Youth). Please read them carefully and if you would like to trace back the development of the ideas brought on paper (very good contributions and other reports) let us know if you would like to receive a collection of materials produced by the conference, and we will send it to you.



Opening service in Jerusalem



Palestinian youth group singing in the opening service

B I B L E S T U D Y
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presented at the Asian Lutheran Youth Gathering in Jerusalem
by Jason Wong

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

"Today is the first day of the rest of our life." An important chapter in your life is about to be written. Certainly it is of vital importance that you take this step in the right spirit.

Allow me, therefore, to impress this truth on your hearts: "WE ARE ONLY THE DIRT WHOM THE LORD USES IN HIS MINISTRY" (John 9:6,7).

"We are only the dust and the dirt." The Savior saw a beggar, born blind, sitting by the wayside and He had compassion on him. Previously, He had allowed the hem of his garment, or little loaves of bread and fish, to help the distressed. This time, however, He wanted to use the very lowliest means to prove that with Him there was no reliance on the type of material but in His power alone.

The day was hot, and on the street there was a great deal of dust - dust and dirt which was trodden under the feet of the people and which was especially offensive to them because it was the Sabbath and they had on their very best clothes. This dust on the ground was no different from the dust in other places. It was not mingled with gold or with powerful healing minerals. It did not come from especially rich ground, but it was just the plain, ordinary dust and dirt of the highway. This was exactly what our Lord wanted to use in this case - the least, the lowliest, and the most despised on earth - dust, dirt and mud.

Will you feel offended if I compare you with this dust on the ground and declare, "We are this dirt?" Did not the Creator make our forefather and remind him at the time of the fall: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return?" Did not the Father of the faithful confess before his Lord when he pleaded for the men of Sodom: "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes?" Are we more than Adam and Abraham?

Dust clings to our clothing and should be brushed away as something that does not belong there, as something unclean. Even there we are like the dust and dirt. Or is that a further insult? Does not the prophet plead: "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness is as a filthy rag"? Are we better than Isaiah? He who believes himself to be an exception certainly does not know himself and does not believe God, who declares: "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one".

"We are only the dust and the dirt" - this conviction cannot be dodged in the God-pleasing disposition of the true servant of Christ. As you go about in His ministry in this place, never forget it.

You are God's honorable people and now you should concern yourselves with sinners, even criminals. Shall this actually cause your pride to be wounded when you know that you are only the dirt of the road?

You know that you are and will be loved, respected and honored by your fellowmen. Can you allow this to make you conceited, or proud, when you know that you are only the dirt of the road?

You are strong and fit for life. Now you are supposed to sit down with the aged and the infirmed, the distressed and the suffering, the unlearned and the sick of mind. Will that be beneath your dignity...will that be called self-sacrifice when you know that you are only the dirt of the road?

"We are only the dust and the dirt, whom the Lord uses." Remember, the Lord stooped down to the ground, to the dust on the street. From the spittle of His mouth He lets a little fall into the dust, and then He stirs this spittle into a salve which He lays on the eyes of the blind man. This Jesus did - "God of God, Light of Light", very God of very God." Yet He uses this humble, lowly dirt as a means of performing one of his greatest miracles. This is an amazing divine condescension; yet I know something even more wonderful: to us, who are only the dust and the dirt on the ground, Immanuel has come down in love and mercy; He has united himself with our flesh and blood; He dwelt among us here on earth and worked among us here. Through His working in and for us, we have become a new leaven and have new life and spiritual power. Yes, He has allowed His holy theology to come into our flesh and blood...to use us as His own means to perform the miracles of grace for the glorification of His name.

You certainly cannot expect that you will be received everywhere with open arms or that you will be welcomed with music and song, or heralded as heroes of faith. You must certainly know by now that many will scoff and some will despise you and say, "What does this fellow want to tell us?" Should it discourage you that the Lord wants to use you, He who has promised to be with us always even unto the end of the world?

You must certainly know by now that in your difficulties and frustrations, with the apparent fruitlessness of your labor, it may even strike you that you are completely unprepared and unworthy. Should you then fulfill Satan's wish and give up your ministry when you know that you are a means in the hands of our Lord, who can work miracles with mud and can make something out of nothing?

"We are the dust and the dirt, whom the Lord uses in His ministry." What a hardship it is to be born blind, to sit by the wayside begging, at the mercy of the passersby. And that, day by day, year after year, hopelessly beyond medical care, because you were born blind. No wonder the disciples, seeing such misery, thought of the stern judgment of God.

But the Lord helped this poor wretched man. And to bring such marvelous help out of such abject misery, the Lord used the dust on the ground, made into mud, and laid it on the eyes of the blind man to be washed off in the pool of siloam.

Keep in mind what we have to do in His ministry. The wretched and the needy must be helped - those poor people whose wretchedness is so much

greater than the misery of the poor blind beggar; those ones who, just as the blind man did sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, know nothing of God's love and mercy; who like those born blind and completely poor and useless cannot help themselves; who are exposed to the terrible judgment of God; who if nothing is done in time will be cast into outer darkness where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth!

They should all be brought to the eternal light, all be filled up with peace and joy; all recognize their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; all come to rejoice with Him eternally. And for that He wants to use you, the dust and the dirt; use you to make seeing people out of the blind, to make rich people out of beggars, to make the sorrowful rejoice.

There will, undoubtedly, be days in which your entire endeavor to carry out His ministry will leave you frustrated and worn out, because everything seems to be in vain; when you will want to cast everything aside with a sigh "It is enough, o Lord!" Will you remember in that hour how eternity will reveal what you cannot see now? How you showed some who were lost the right way; how you held back the despairing from death; how you sowed the little seed that brought the good fruit; how you lifted up the weary? Seen in the light of eternity, that which the Lord does through you, is rated higher than all the achievements of the great, the famous, and the celebrated of this world. Truly, the Lord will say to you: "Well done, good and faithful servant...enter into the joy of your master."

In order to help with this I beg you to always remember: "We are only the dust and the dirt of the earth, whom the Lord uses in His ministry." Certainly the Lord will use you as never before to serve Him whom angels long to serve. Soli deo Gloria!

FINAL STATEMENT OF THE ASIAN LUTHERAN YOUTH GATHERING
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I. PREAMBLE

The Asian Lutheran Youth Gathering (ALYG), sponsored by the Lutheran World Federation/Department of Church Cooperation - Youth Desk upon the highly appreciated invitation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan (ELCJ), took place in Jerusalem on August 2-16, 1987. The ALYG participants express their deep appreciation to the ELCJ Youth Committee for all it has done to bring about the success of this gathering.

We, the 65 participants composed of youth delegates of 22 LWF member churches in Asia, 5 from other continents, the World Council of Churches, observers from the ELCJ and its Youth Committee and LWF staff members studied together the theme "Lutheran Youth Confessing Christ in Asia". Bible studies conducted by the various delegations, lectures to the sub-themes: 1. Challenges of the Lutheran Churches in Asia, by Dr. Paul Rajashekar of India; 2. Witness to the Gospel, by Rev. Wilando Roa of the Philippines; 3. Witness in the social Services, by Ms. Esther Tse of Hong Kong; 4. Witness in the political engagement, by Rev. Munib Younan of the ELCJ, reports from the represented churches including the detailed reports of the host ELCJ, as well as the extensive visitation program to the sites connected with Old Testament events, the life of Jesus and recent events of Palestinian and Israeli history helped us to explore this theme.

During our working group sessions the following aspects of our witness were discussed:

1. Among other world religions
2. With other Christian churches
3. Among secularized people
4. In one's own Lutheran church.

A sign of the blessings poured upon this gathering from our Lord could be seen in the joyful and open fellowship which grew in the course of the meeting, showing its convincing fruits in the worship life, cultural evening and social activities conducted by the participants.

We have agreed to address the youth of our member churches in Asia, as well as our ecumenical partners, through the "Letter to the Asian Youth" which is attached to this document. In the same way we have agreed to pass on through the respective LWF structures the following resolutions adopted by the ALYG:

II. RESOLUTIONS

1. WHEREAS Christianity is a minority religion in Asia and,
WHEREAS the Lutheran Churches in Asia live in a situation of diverse cultures, traditions and great religious pluralism, and
WHEREAS we believe this situation necessitates the question of how to effectively and faithfully witness to Jesus Christ while living under such circumstances and,

WHEREAS we believe that it is in relation to people of other faiths that we can begin to fully understand our own faith, and
WHEREAS we recognize it as a part of our Christian witness to seek better understanding of the lives and faiths of other peoples.

Therefore, it is

RESOLVED that the Asian Lutheran Youth Gathering participants urge the LWF, through its Youth Desk and Department of Studies to:

- a) organize regional meetings in Asia every three years in order to facilitate better understanding among the youth in Asia, strengthen and improve their witness and offer possibilities for the participation of youth in inter-religious dialogue, cooperation and coexistence;
- b) Organize and sponsor such a meeting to be held in 1990 and the theme of this meeting is "Confessing Christ Among Other World Religions".
 1. This meeting should expose Lutheran youth to the lives, cultures, and faiths of other religious communities (e.g. Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism, etc.)
 2. This meeting should also address the issues of religious fanaticism (e.g. Islamic Fundamentalism), cults and new religious movements in Asia
 3. This meeting should study the question of effective and faithful witness while living among other religious communities
 4. This meeting should include youth from outside of Asia.

RESOLVED to include in its next Youth Newsletter, a detailed report on the events, lectures and resolutions of the ALYG with specific attention given to this theme and that this report be distributed to all participants and LWF member churches. Furthermore, we urge the LWF member churches in Asia to:

- a) Consider the possibility of organizing sub-regional meetings for the youth. Concrete suggestions should be submitted to the LWF Youth Desk, if assistance is needed.
 - b) Establish a dialogue with other religions on local and regional levels, strengthen existing social service programs, such as telephone counseling and vocational training and, where none, exist, establish them. Where possible, the mass media should be utilized to promote such programs.
2. WHEREAS the ALYG feels that there is a need for leadership training among the youth in Asia. Therefore, it is

RESOLVED that we encourage the LWF member churches to initiate and establish leadership programs in cooperation with the LWF Youth Desk.

3. WHEREAS our Christian brothers and sisters in various parts of the world such as South Africa, Namibia and Palestine are suffering from grave violations of their basic human rights. Therefore, it is

RESOLVED that we express our solidarity with all peoples in these territories. We support the initiative of the LWF Executive Committee to assist the ELCJ in pursuing the human rights issues within the area leading to the establishment of peace, justice and security for all nations of the region. As a part of this initiative, we encourage the LWF General Secretariat and the Youth Desk, in cooperation with the ELCJ, to consider possible youth summer camps, as well as any other such programs designed to foster international participation by the youth of the LWF member churches with the ELCJ on a regular basis. We also request the LWF member churches to urge their respective governments to impose economic sanctions on South Africa for its apartheid policy and destabilization activities in neighboring frontline states.

4. WHEREAS the Asian youth are concerned with the violations of human rights in the region and are interested in addressing these issues. Therefore, it is

RESOLVED that the ALYG urge the LWF to establish regional human rights committees which would cooperate with other churches in the region and/or with the World Council of Churches (WCC), Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and other existing Christian organizations in these countries; and, we urge the LWF member churches to express their solidarity with a) people struggling for peace and justice and self-determination, b) people suffering from starvation/malnutrition and to encourage and support development programs.

5. WHEREAS the Asian youth want to be kept informed of the life of the Asian churches and the problems of the young people on socio-economic, political, and mission-related issues. Therefore, it is

RESOLVED that member churches should strongly encourage the youth leaders and participants of the ALYG to commit themselves to regularly submit news on the above mentioned issues to the Hong Kong-based Asia Lutheran Press Service (ALPS), the Geneva-based Lutheran World Information (LWI) and the YOUTH NEWSLETTER of the LWF Youth Desk. These publications are encouraged to reflect the concerns and problems of the Asian youth.

6. WHEREAS the LWF member churches are thankful for the partnership we have enjoyed with expatriate mission and service agencies, we are also aware of situations where some overseas agencies continue to play a dominant role by disregarding local or national churches. Therefore, it is

RESOLVED that we urge overseas mission and service agencies and local churches to develop meaningful partnership and cooperation, both in mission and in service.

7. WHEREAS Christianity, though an Asian religion in origin, is often seen as a Western religion in Asia, and
WHEREAS Asian Christians are looking for a way to truly express their faith in their context and cultures. Therefore, it is

RESOLVED that the LWF member churches are urged to

- a) Formulate a local pattern of worship and on the sharing of the sacrament, and

- b) make efforts to contextualize its faith, theology and Christian practice.

8. WHEREAS Asian culture strongly values the community and traditionally views life in a wholistic manner; and,
WHEREAS the Gospel calls us into community, and because God first loved us we are to love one another. We are to respond to each other with respect, honor and dignity; and,
WHEREAS when we do not treat each other with respect and dignity, the Gospel passionately calls us to seek and wholeheartedly pray for and work for peace and justice in the community. Therefore, it is

RESOLVED that the Asian Lutheran Youth Gathering:

- a) Affirms the value of community in Asian cultures;
 - b) Calls for the equal partnership of women and men within our community and church;
 - c) Calls for the equal opportunity for women and men in leadership and decision-making roles;
 - d) Calls upon the LWF to sponsor and organize Young Asian Women's Conference within the next three years in order to:
 - i) increase our understanding and awareness of the roles of women within our various cultures, in our Lutheran churches and in the biblical tradition;
 - ii) reflect upon the role of women within socio-political and theological contexts;
 - iii) envision a new partnership between women and men within our church and society.
 - e) Calls for the use of inclusive language (when English is the communicating language) at church meetings, to ensure that the language reflects our understanding of equality between women and men in our church and society. (For example: "he" or "she" shall be used instead of just "he", or "chairperson" instead of "chairman".)
9. WHEREAS we, the participants of the ALYG are aware of the physical and sexual abuse often suffered by many Asian women who, often out of economic and/or political necessity, are forced to become migrant workers and,
WHEREAS we are also aware of the rapidly growing "sex tour" industry throughout Asian countries which exploits the economic misfortune of women. Therefore, it is

RESOLVED that the LWF urge its member churches throughout Asia to address this issue by:

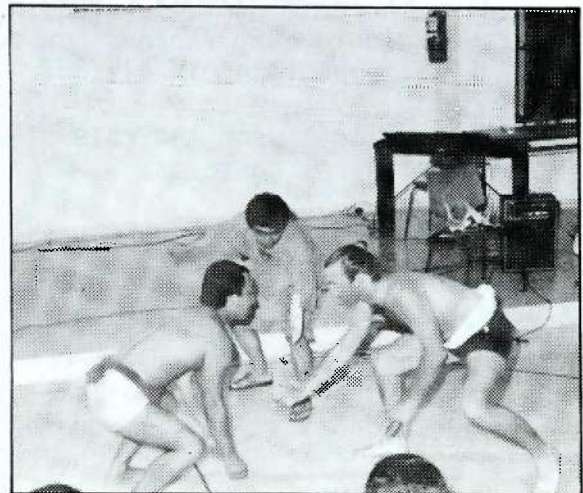
- a) Speaking out against the exploitation of women and especially the "sex tour" industry.

- b) Encouraging their respective governments to intervene on behalf of these women.
- c) Providing interchurch guidance and counseling for women who have suffered under such abuse.

CULTURAL EVENING IN BEIT JALA:



Palestinian wedding



Sumo wrestling

Chinese group singing



A funny game

III. A LETTER TO THE ASIAN YOUTH

Greetings from the participants of the Asian Lutheran youth Gathering. We have come from 16 countries in Asia, Europe, Africa and the Americas to share our experience and to study the theme, "The Lutheran Youth Confessing Christ in Asia". We would like to share with you what became the heartbeat of this gathering.

To follow the footsteps of our Lord in the Holy Land was a dream of yesterday but has today become a reality. The beauty and splendor of this biblical and historical region brings to life the scriptural events that we have sought to fully comprehend. The Bible comes alive! We walk through the gates, the city, the walls and citadels of the old city of Jerusalem and we begin to understand the Psalmist when he proclaimed:

"I rejoiced with those who said to me,
'Let us go to the house of the Lord.'
Our feet are standing in your gates, O Jerusalem.
Jerusalem is built like a city that is
closely compacted together...
Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
'May those who love you be secure,
May there be peace within your walls
and security within your citadels..."

(from Psalms 122:1-3, 6-7)

Living together as one with people from different cultural backgrounds and ways of life, and embracing different aspirations and national ideals no doubt can create tensions. Yet these new experiences formed the basis for unbreakable bonds of friendship and partnership across the oceans. It is our prayer that you also will experience this fellowship of love and unity and that it will continue even in our churches and our homes.

We are called to live a Christian witness in this diverse and pluralistic continent - a vast land of different cultures, races, religions, languages and traditions - where poverty and economic exploitation threaten the life and hopes of the people.

We are called to witness to the Gospel, to respond to the searching God who is almighty and holy and who represents life and love in a suffering world that is still in captivity and where spiritual darkness and ignorance continue to dominate peoples' minds. Our witness is to the reconciling love of God in Christ in the face of a materialistic society, which is experiencing a revival of traditional religions and national self-consciousness.

We are called to witness through the social work of the church. The Bible is full of examples of the role of the people of God in one's own society. The prophets called for repentance wherever there was a lack of social consciousness. Jesus taught compassion for our society and the writers of the Epistles exhort us to participate in the social life of our communities.

Our role is to establish a social ministry in our own context. Our role is the share the unconditional love of God in Christ in our own society with

a sacrificial attitude and not a crusader's one, always reminding ourselves of the meaning of the cross of Christ.

We are called as young people to witness in the political arena, as the conscience of the nation and society, proclaiming the love of Christ for all humankind in loving even our enemies and addressing the policies of the nations.

We are invited by our Lord to develop a new vision of a just model of society which will prevent those who have been gifted with more from exploiting the less fortunate and to allow an equal participation of all members of society. This vision, as a part of our prophetic task, should lead us to search for reconciliation and build bridges in our societies.

At the same time, we are invited to judge existing models developed by others, with implications for justice and cooperation on national, regional and global levels and to support those which affirm justice and participation for all while maintaining our vision of The Kingdom of God inspired by the biblical message.

Finally, we want to be reminded of the challenges facing us as young people and youth workers of the churches in Asia:

How shall we address the problem of alienation and loneliness of the young Asian people in an increasingly secularized society?

How can we reconcile our preaching with our life-style?

How do we fight against the rise of materialism in Asia where millions of people are poverty-stricken?

How can we find Christ in our own racial, cultural and national environment?

How can we worship God with words, songs, dances and other expressions in common with our own life-style?

How shall we sing the Lord's song with our own people?

How can we better understand the fellowship of bread and wine in our supper in a land of rice and tea, a land where many people have never known a full meal?

How can our faith undergird our Asian ideals of family solidarity, hospitality, spirit of cooperation and sharing of life?

How do we understand and relate positively with people of other faiths and ideologies while continuing to effectively witness our faith to them?

How do we work for political and social change in areas where basic human rights are denied as in the case of our host church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan/West Bank?

May our Creator grant us the wisdom and power to faithfully face the challenges before us.

Rejoice with us!
We are one in the Spirit!

From the Participants of the
Asian Lutheran Youth Gathering
Jerusalem



The THALITA KUMI School in Beit Jala where the Asian Lutheran
Youth Gathering partially took place

R E P O R T

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on Youth Seminar on Spirituality

A youth seminar on the theme "Our Quest for Spirituality" was jointly organized by the LWF Department of Studies, Program for dialogue with other faiths, led by Dr. Paul Rajashekar, and the Youth Desk in the Department of Church Cooperation. The seminar took place in Rättvik, Sweden on August 23-31, 1987.

The quest for spirituality led us to an attempt to understand first of all the spirituality of the youth of today. There are so many different signs of spirituality...:

PEANUTS



How shall we answer the existing challenges? What should we do in our witness to the youth?

In the following we will share with you a report on this seminar by Frieda Pruim of the Netherlands and a letter to the youth from the participants of the seminar.

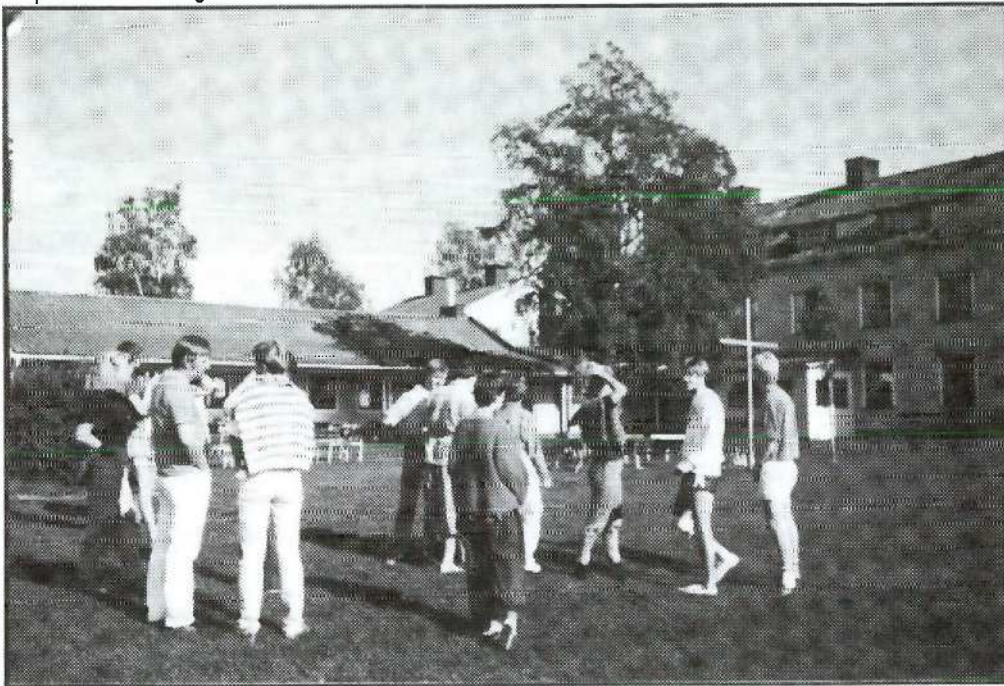


Personal sharing before the program starts

Report by Frieda Pruim:

Lutheran youth seminar about spirituality in Sweden: What is spirituality after all?

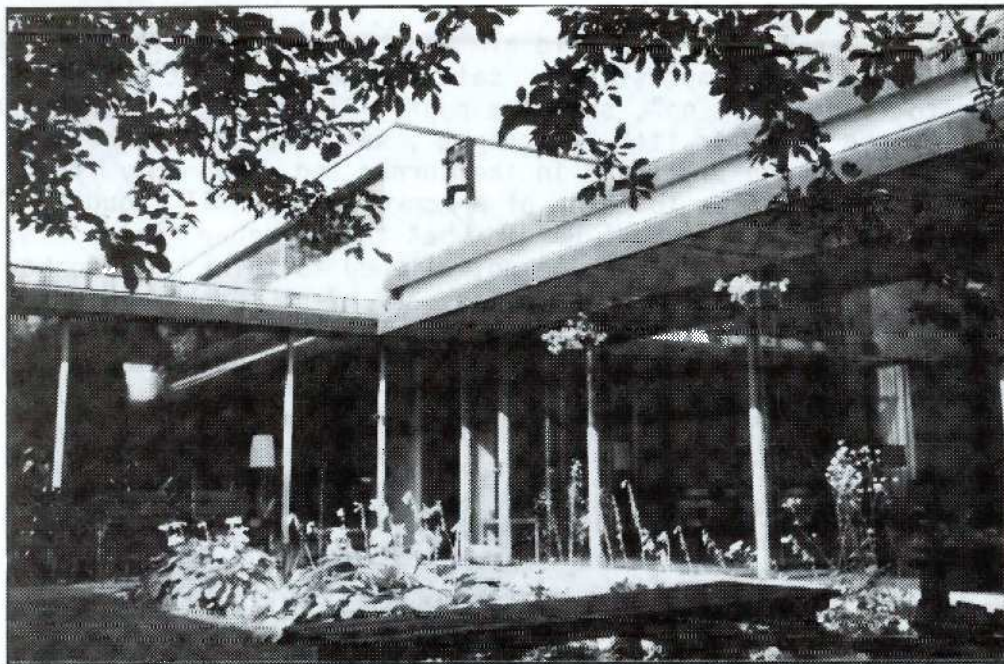
A man came to a Zen teacher and told him that he wanted to learn to meditate in three days. "Impossible", said the teacher, "it will take your whole life to learn". "Oh no", said the pupil, "I am very clever and I have only three days for it!" "All right", said the Zen teacher, "I will give you a task. Go and sit there in the corner and the only thing you will have to do is not to think of a monkey! The pupil thought: that's easy! I never think of a monkey! He did what the teacher told him; sat down in the corner and thought: I'm not allowed to think of a monkey, I'm not allowed... In this way the theologian and Zen teacher Michael von Brück explained Zen meditation to us and also the possible difficulties with it. A day of Zen meditation was part of a Lutheran Youth Seminar about spirituality in Sweden.



Stiftsgården

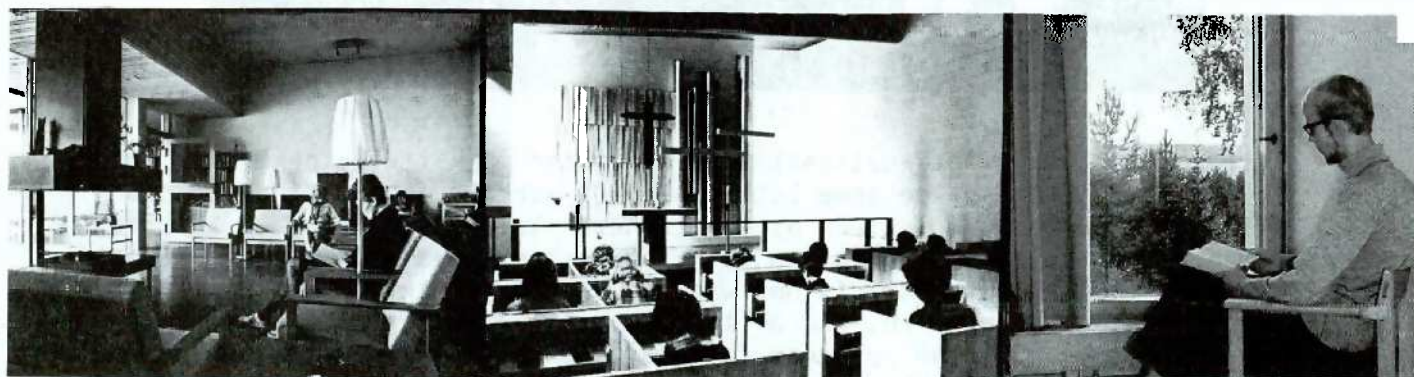
Stiftsgården, an international meeting center in Rättvik, next to a lake in Sweden. To this place some Lutheran youth workers from different countries in Europe were invited by the Lutheran World Federation to talk for a week about spirituality and to gain some experiences with silence as a method. The organizers did not want to narrow the seminar to purely Lutheran visions. Therefore, one of the two staff members, an Indian, was a representative of the program for dialogue with other faiths, an office which is part of the LWF. The other staff member was the coordinator of the LWF youth desk. He is from Czechoslovakia. The German theologian Michael von Brück was invited because of his involvement in methods and techniques from Oriental religions. To make the seminar more ecumenical, a Japanese man from the World Council of Churches was present. He invited me to represent the non-Lutheran Christian young people of Europe. An absurd idea, of course. A week in a world which I don't know. With three Germans, two Finns, three Swedes, two Norwegians, three Danes, two Austrians, one Italian and one from Poland.

After a day of getting to know each other and canoeing on the lake, we climbed the nearby mountain in the evening. On this mountain St. Davids-garden is situated, a retreat center where groups regularly spend some days in silence.



St. Davidsgården - the retreat center

For the next three days, we as a group, will also experience this. Every day there were four short devotions, two meditations and one instruction, led by Rev. Per Larsson from the Church of Sweden. Of course, we also had meals which we ate together in silence. The rest of the time you could spend in whatever way you wanted. Everyone had his/her own room with a bed and a writing desk, where he/she could go whenever they wanted. In the surroundings there were woods where we could go for walks and in the center there was also a chapel and a sitting room.



It is very extraordinary to live together in silence with a group of people whom you hardly know. Also without words or other forms of communication a relationship is created. Maybe even more solid than by words. There is much time to think about your faith and your spirituality, with reference to the meditations about the Beatitudes or apart from that. Some people answered the following question either in writing or by painting a picture: Why do I believe? Is it not much more logical or easier not to believe?

A German girl: "Facing the knowledge of those who denied God's existence, I feel like an orphan. They keep telling me that my parents died a long time ago and in a way I even do believe that what they are saying is true. Still I leave this home and I will wander about, searching for my parents in everyone I meet and in everything I see." Other persons are more sure: "For me faith is not a question of logic. I believe in God because I have experienced Him concretely in my life and in the life of Jesus Christ. Because of Him I have come nearer to God, because I have been engaged in His person. 'Jesus is alive'! is for me not a sentence without meaning, because I meet Him everywhere: in the streets, when I meet people who need help, when I am allowed to help people with their problems, when someone helps me, in prayer and in the Bible."

The last day of the silence we practiced Zen meditation, under the direction of Michael von Brück. This meditation is a method coming from the Oriental religions. For a lot of Lutheran young people in this seminar, this is a reason to distrust this method very much. They are afraid of being manipulated, afraid of power in their body which they cannot handle. They are also afraid that this meditation is not "good Lutheranism". In the Zen meditation you make yourself empty of all thoughts. You can concentrate on one point as a help. This concentration point can be anything, from counting your breath to Jesus Christ.

I do not understand very well why so many young people here distrust this meditation. I can imagine that meditation as a method is not in your line, but unintended power...you yourself are part of it, are you not? It is striking that Michael von Brück, after reading about the roots of Lutheran spirituality, became much more credible to a lot of members. Letter marked: thank God he is still one of us. We discovered that it is extremely hard to be empty in silence, after some days in which you became used to fill the silence with thinking of God.

The last two days we worked in two groups. Group no. 1 was occupied with spirituality as a motivating force of Christian community; Group no. 2 with spirituality as an inspiration for (political) action. Finally we came to the basic question: what is spirituality? We were searching for a definition which was good for all of us. That was very hard, because in answering this essential question nobody wanted to make concessions. Especially Group no. 1 separated, in their final definition, spirituality itself and the disciplines and methods which can help to express the spirituality. Many misunderstandings were developed because of mixing the disciplines and methods (such as music, liturgy, prayer, meditation) and the source of it. They thought that these concrete expressions of spirituality (according to the dictionary 'the way one witnesses his/her faith') were the same as spirituality itself. Spirituality was defined by this group as 'living in the constant awareness of the presence of God'; your whole life is spiritual, except when you are consciously acting non-Christian. Group no. 2 added that the impact of spirituality is also knowing your responsibilities and acting to improve circumstances nearby and far away.

For some of the young people in this seminar it was a problem how you can come to the same point of action from different sources (e.g. Communists and Christians against cruise missiles), while the problem is more that you can come to different, contradictory points of action from the same source (Christians in favor of and against cruise missiles). Talking about the retreat, we discovered that silence can be, also or especially for young people, a good spiritual method. We also discovered that most of us have

been to Taizé at least one time. The spiritual methods of Taizé seem to be attractive to a lot of young people. Political action, forms of expression like drama and music in (and outside) the liturgy, go back to the roots of of your faith. Methods of Oriental religions are also possible expressions of spirituality, especially for young people.

We finally established that the churches often do not listen (enough) to young people. The church does not any more have the function which it should have. One of the participants gave the following example: in Western Germany a demonstration was held. It started raining very much and the demonstrating people fled into the nearest church. Immediately they were expelled by the sacristan. Why did he not call for an organist instead to liven things up?



The church in Rättvik, dominating the whole area

LETTER TO THE YOUTH
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Stiftsgården
Rättvik, Sweden

August 31, 1987

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This letter comes to you from the participants of a youth "Seminar on Spirituality" held in the beautiful surroundings of Stiftsgården, Rättvik, Sweden during the last week of August, 1987. 23 people, mostly youth workers in churches from 12 different nationalities (Austria, Denmark, Finland, W. Germany, Italy, Norway, The Netherlands, Poland, Sweden) together with resource persons from Czechoslovakia, India, W. Germany and Japan) struggled together the challenges and concerns of our spirituality in the context of our respective churches and societies.

Our meeting was sponsored by the Lutheran World Federation (Office for Church and People of other Faiths, Department of Studies and Youth Desk, Department of Church Cooperation). The World Council of Churches was represented by the subunit of Renewal and Congregational Life.

The purpose of our meeting was to understand and explore our "spirituality" in the European context. As part of our exploration we spent time together in outdoor activities, in silent retreat for three days and three days of stimulating discussions. This letter is meant to share with you briefly the concerns we grappled together.

As young people we are quite conscious that we live in an age of crisis, confusion and loss of meaning. A vast majority of young people in our generation are caught in this crisis and are constantly in search of values and activities that are meaningful to them. A good many of them experience a hunger for spirituality which is often not met or satisfied in the life and activities of our congregations and churches in Europe. Thus they have chosen to follow the values that are popular and esoteric in our societies and have gradually drifted away from Christian faith. What do we do to help revive a meaningful Christian spirituality was the central focus of our meeting.

In struggling with this question we attempted to discover the depth and richness of spirituality inherent in our Christian tradition. By "spirituality" we mean a life lived in the constant awareness of God's presence. Our spirituality therefore embraces our whole life in all its dimensions. Quite frequently, the word spirituality in common usage has been understood in a narrow way referring the dimensions of our soul or pertaining to particular religious experiences. In our deliberations, however, we understand "spirituality" in a dynamic sense involving our total life. Our spirituality manifests itself in the unfolding of our life, amidst human activity, as we seek to be disciples of Jesus Christ. In oth-

er words, our spirituality is not only what we say or profess to believe but how we live out our professed beliefs, how we order our lives under the power of the Holy Spirit.

As Christian youth we are aware that expressing our spirituality in our world of crisis, tensions and ego-centeredness is indeed a challenging task. In some of our societies professing to be a Christian is often frowned upon and therefore requires a deeper commitment and courage on our part. Our temptation is to cultivate our spirituality as something private and individualistic. In our deliberations, we have discovered that our spirituality, first of all is rooted in the spirituality of our community/congregation. It is essential therefore that our participation in the congregational and community life is a crucial one.

The challenge before us is to revitalize our community life and to enable it to become a source and strength of our spiritual life.

Secondly, we have realized that spirituality involves a growth in faith. This requires discipline, prayer, silence, contemplation and eucharistic celebration. These are avenues that promote self- reflection individually and collectively.

Thirdly, our spirituality requires a commitment to love and serve. It is a commitment to participate in struggles and concerns of people, in the context of our communities and nations. Sometimes this requires patient dialogue with those who differ from us on specific issues bearing in mind our unity and oneness in faith and fellowship. In our wholehearted engagement in concrete sociopolitical issues of our contexts that our liturgy is transformed into a living witness, our faith incarnates in actual life.

Our spirituality therefore is an integrating force that binds us to God and all our neighbors. In expressing our spirituality in the world we are manifesting God's grace in us and through us.

In sharing these thoughts with you, dear brothers and sisters, we call upon all the young people in our churches to make your spirituality transparent in your life and community, in your prayer, worship and celebration, and in your commitment to the concerns of humanity.

In closing we extend to you our cordial greetings and good wishes that you may constantly seek to live out your faith under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In Christ,

Participants of the
LWF Youth Seminar
on Spirituality in Rättvik

"ON A YOUTH ENCOUNTER BETWEEN TWO DIFFERENT WORLDS AND CHURCHES"

(Marie Nordström, the author of this article, has been working with the project "be a comrade with Southern Africa" in the Church of Sweden)

The project "Be a comrade with Southern Africa", which is a project within the Swedish Lutheran Church, wants to build up a relationship between youth organizations. Another aim is to organize and develop solidarity work for Southern Africa in Sweden. The twenty Swedish youth who worked and studied in Swaziland last year as guests in the Lutheran church there have now been touring around Sweden trying to inspire people to their responsibility, through their experiences and knowledge. We must increase awareness that we in the "rich" world are a main part of the problems of the world but that we are also a part of the solution if we change our way of living.

This year a group of young people from Swaziland came to Sweden as a part of this exchange program. In one of the first circular letters from the Swazis to their congregations after their return home you can read about the "old people's home" that we have in Sweden. These institutions started at the end of the nineteenth century when Sweden was developing very fast. The young people leave their homes and go for jobs far from their parents. This makes it impossible to take care of them. The government started these homes and nowadays there are a lot of different alternatives for the old people. You can, for example, get a home help who is paid by the state. But almost everyone spends their last years in some kind of old people's home or in hospital. The old people's homes are very well equipped and on-going activities to keep the people fit and healthy. People are employed for cooking, cleaning and nursing. Many old people think it is nice to be there, to talk to people they grew up with, but often it is difficult to feel really at home there. In Swaziland, as in many other countries in Africa, it is the duty of the relatives to take care of their old people. The Swazis sent a reflection back home in their circular letter: "Will we come to the stage of taking care of the old people by putting them in a big institution? Will the old people move from their homes leaving the traditional life, cattle and all their belongings? Are we aware of what is approaching?"

The Swazi group were of course impressed by our democratic society with all its advantages, like the right to participate in decision making, excellent medical care and the equality laws. They were impressed by our highly developed means of communication, industries and welfare system, but as Mafika Shebalala, one of the youth said: "All this has been done in order to make life easy for man. You can watch TV, listen to music but that will not give you the answers to your daily questions, answers to your social problems, it will never give solutions. The disputes within your family cannot be solved by the expensive car you drive or the clothes you wear."

In Swaziland, even if you struggle hard for your survival, you can find a harmony, a calmness and often a nearness to other people, something we often lack in our comfortable and rational country. I wonder what we have gained and what we have lost in the process of industrialization? We must start to reevaluate our style of life.

Here is a poem by Susan Dladla, one of the girls of the group from Swaziland:

Wherever you come wherever you go
 People are smiling at you.
 Without a word.
 You come into a shop,
 People are smiling at you
 And no word after that.
 You are working in the street,
 Different people are smiling at you.
 But still no word at all.
 Now you are meeting a person
 Whom you are familiar to,
 This one is smiling and greeting you.
 After departing with this one,
 You are meeting others again still,
 Smiling without a word.

What should you do now?
 Perhaps it's better to greet them if they smile
 Because you have learnt to greet in Swedish.
 Oh what a simple word of greeting in Swedish,
 Just to say, Hej! (hey).
 You are still meeting people
 Most of them are still smiling at you.

But when you do the same and greet them,
 They never say a word but,
 They quicken their steps.
 Now you are meeting someone whom you know again,
 You smile and greet each other.
 You know why the others didn't reply to you?
 The answer is, you greet someone whom you know.

I understand this poem. When I was in Swaziland I experienced that a meeting on the road means a dialogue, about how life is and how you feel, not only a short Hello. I also found something typical of the life there while I was waiting for a delayed bus to come. The fellowship together with the people waiting for the bus is so far from our society where well oiled and impersonal buses are perfectly on time.

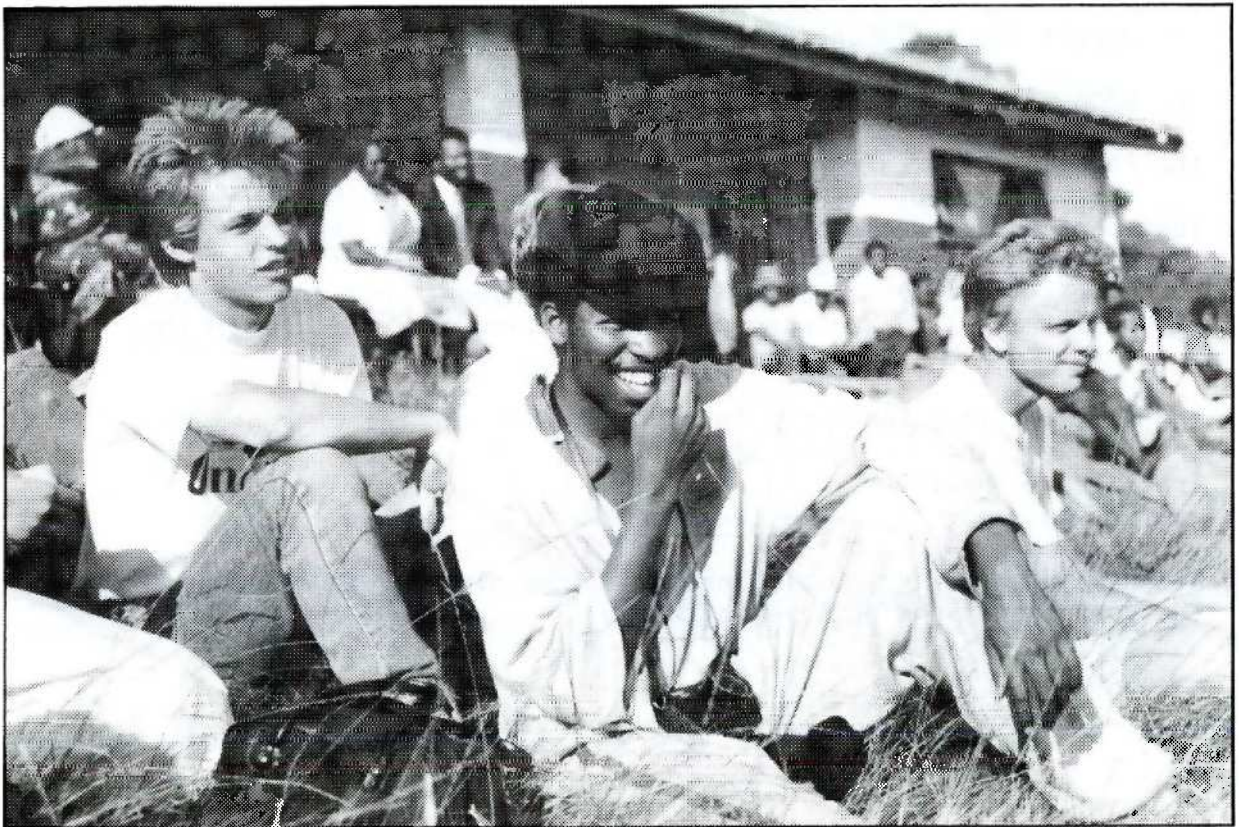
What are the experiences of the Swazis in the Swedish congregations? Zanele Nxumalo says: There's a big difference between youth here in Sweden and at home. Here in Sweden youth are more conscious of what is happening in the world. Even if we are neighbors of South Africa, you get more information about what is happening there here in Sweden than we get at home."

I remember the meetings with different youth groups in Swaziland and their activities. The choirs play a big role in youth work and seem to be a place of joy and inspiration. But I wonder what happens to those who do not like to sing? Other activities are Bible studies. It is to be hoped that inspiration and frankness will find a way outside of the singing and the Bible studies. The youth movement there seems to miss one dimension. Often young people listen and take for granted what the elders say and do

not draw their own conclusions. I remember when we were staying some weeks in a pastor's house in the countryside of Swaziland. We felt a bit alone and thought maybe that is was too far from the community. After some weeks we understood that the youth did not want to visit us without any special reason because of the fact that we were staying with the pastor and that made them shy. The respect for the pastor must be a heritage from colonial times.

It is nice to follow the development of both the Swazis and the Swedes in the project. Many of the Swedes got inspiration and courage to talk about their Christian faith. I also heard a discussion among the Swazis about the United States' support to Contras in Nicaragua.

Finally, I asked Mafika Shebalala what the Swazi group will do when they are back in Swaziland. "Our youth movement is very small and weak. We want it to be strong and lively. It is hard to find ways. We also want to develop cooperation with the Lutheran World Service which works in our country. They are active with a refugee settlement called Ndzewane, in the south east of our country. I know that they need clothes in that place. We can arrange a collection for them. And then, of course, we will show slides about Sweden and write some articles. It has been a big change in our lives to come to another country, our perspective has become bigger."



DISARMAMENT AND DEVELOPMENT:

A Challenge to the Youth

by Paul A. Wee, Assistant General Secretary for international affairs and human rights in Geneva, who attended the United Nations conference on "Disarmament and Development" in New York in September 1987 on behalf of the Lutheran World Federation

I

During a coffee break at the first United Nations-sponsored conference on the relationship between Disarmament and Development, held in New York in August, I picked up a local newspaper and read a story about the lingering territorial war between Chad and Libya. It reported that a Libyan war plane, a Soviet-built TU-22 bomber, was shot down with a U.S.-made Hawk missile fired from a French plane in the service of Chad.

On the same page was an article about civilian deaths in Iraq which resulted from the firing of a U.S. missile sold to Iran in return for funds to support the anti-Sandinist Contra rebels in Nicaragua.

On page three I read about a deadly accurate Silkworm missile from China fired by Iranians at a Kuwaiti ship under protection by U.S. warships in the Persian Gulf.

These are only three among thousands of examples of the scenarios of death which characterize the global trade in weapons of destruction today. Total cost of all armaments: US\$ 1 trillion per year. This amounts to an expenditure for military hardware of US\$ 2 million every single minute.

There is a little known but interesting fact about the great majority of people whom these weapons are killing and maiming on the battlegrounds of Iran, Iraq, Angola, Namibia, Sudan, Chad, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Nicaragua, El Salvador, etc: they are the youth.

It has been rightly said that it is the old men who make wars but it is the youth who fight and die in them.

II

Now turn the picture over. One fifth of the entire population of the world lives in desperate poverty and suffers malnutrition. Forty thousand young people will die each day of diseases for which there are known and available cures. The hard fact is that international health organizations are simply not provided the necessary funds. Every single one of these chil-

dren would be able to live if funds equivalent to a mere 2 and 1/2 hours-expenditure on the arms race were made available. Just think, the scourge of smallpox was completely eradicated by the World Health Organization at a cost of only \$ 300 million, the price of a single sophisticated missile!

Again, there is a little known but interesting fact about the great majority of people who, in this massive imbalance in the expenditure of funds, are required by the system to suffer and to die: they are the youth.

Quite frankly, if I were a youth today and if I were aware of what is happening to my peers throughout the world, I would say NO! This would not be enough of course, but it would be a place to start.

III

Something much more demanding is needed. The closer one gets to the tangle of international economic and political relationships which determine who buys and who sells, who lives and who dies, the more one realizes the formidable complexities involved. It is not sufficient simply to acknowledge the terrible irony of the escalating arms race and the fact of massive underdevelopment and poverty in the world. What is required is a mastery of the tools of analysis, an understanding of the complex relationship between disarmament and development and a firm commitment to seek reasoned change over the long haul.

Herein lies the challenge to the youth of the church, to those who have gained insight into the forces of death in our world, and who are revolted at the inversion of values on which so much of contemporary thinking is based. The message is clear --- use your God-given experience, reason, insight and talent to work for meaningful change.

Those who have discovered Jesus Christ will not tolerate poverty or hunger or the structural oppression of people on which they are based. They will not sit idly by as the precious, finite resources of God's creation are consumed to forge weapons of war. They will make a decision to act and some will even put their bodies on the line. In so doing they will choose not for death, but for life.

"I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore, choose life, that you and your descendants may live." (Deuteronomy 30:19)

LETTER FROM A READER

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"What does it mean to become a Christian in my society"

First of all "to become a Christian" means to return from a wrong direction to the right one. It means to search and find the true Saviour who can give everlasting life after death. To become a Christian is to realize the bad life and to leave it behind in order to take or walk in the right direction.

The phrase "in my society" signifies abiding in the group to which you yourself have the full right to enjoy your freedom. It does not refer to another person, group or people, but to you own group.

As mentioned above, it means to identify bad from good and to select the right way. It is true that to be one single cell among many, means that there will be problems to confront. Many times there will be opposition from different people. However that single cell will influence some other cells in such a way that there will be more of them.

As long as that single cell is present, all will respect him and will expect something important from that person. As a person with one eye in a city of blind people is king, so will Christians be in their society. Even though that person is isolated from friends, whatever he says and does will be good and of benefit to all others and not only to himself.

It will be a single light in a dark place which gives light and attracts others because of its brightness and a Christian in a society will attract others because of the joy which is in the heart that came from the Saviour Jesus Christ. As in darkness the light is badly needed, so a single Christian is badly needed in society. God blessed the entire people of Israel because of the obedience of Abraham. Blessing will not come because of the number of people in a population, but it will come for the sake of a few righteous ones. Therefore, a Christian in a society is a means of blessing to that society.

A Christian in a society will teach and remind the whole society that there is a Living God who is in charge of everything. We, the human beings, are to listen to His words and to follow Him for the advantage of receiving an abundance of blessings. Because we are human beings, it happens that we leave Him. But through one person who is a true Christian the entire society can remember the Creator and turn away from their wrong ways.

Nardos Ghebream
Ethiopia

POEM FROM A READER

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As you know we have asked our readers to send us poems reflecting our concerns. Here is one which we received from a reader in Malaysia regarding the suffering of innocent people through violence:

DEATH OF AN INDIAN

He was a Sikh, an Indian by birth.
He was jovial, a heart full of mirth.
Faithful to his wife, a good father,
Faults he had some, like any other.

He was good with his hands, a mechanic,
Never too greedy, but with ambitions to make it big.
Always enjoyed a walk down the garden,
A good friend to talk to, to share your burden.

Sometimes he would smile and shake his head,
Thinking of times gone by, lying on his bed.
He would never forget that embarrassing time,
When he tried to court that sweet girl, to wine and dine.

She gave him a look of terrible shock
Safeguarding her dignity, hardening like rock.
But one fine day, she warmly responded,
Opening her heart, all fear and shyness suspended.

He was undecided about Khalistan! *
He had always been a citizen of Hindustan! **
India was his nation, and Indian he'll be,
Till the day he dies, throughout eternity.

Endless killing and violence, of what use was it?
Terrorists creating havoc,
and in the Holy Temple where they hid?
No! This must never be!
Desecration, he could never stand to see!

Indira Gandhi shot dead, he couldn't believe.
Was violence the heart of Sikh belief?
Now reprisal would surely come their way,
All Sikhs, the innocent too, would they slay?

He could hear voices, now they were shouts.
Men bearing scrapers, and torches outside.
Surrounding his village, they set fire to his house,
Now he was sad, then his anger was aroused.

His only thought was to save his family.
He could do nothing for his neighbors, nor their baby.
And for his family, it was too late,
To see them die, his heart did ache.

Now alone, he took to the streets.
Hate was in his heart, vengeance on his lips.
In his lone endeavor he was slain,
And for his blood, who was to blame?

Thus was the death of a loyal Sikh,
And thus the future of a nation, bleak.
Thus was the death of a true Indian,
Thus is the story of a Sikh Indian.

Dedicated to all those innocent people who died during the aftermath of Indira's assassination.

Submitted by
Rueben Chelliah,
Malaysia

- * Khalistan - proposed independent state of Sikhs
- ** Hindustan - other name for India

NEWS IN BRIEF - from the life of the youth in the world

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BERLIN (BRD und DDR) (epd)

Berlin - Im nächsten Jahr werden voraussichtlich 15 West-Berliner Jugendgruppen für eine Woche in die DDR reisen und bis zu fünf Gruppen aus der DDR nach West-Berlin kommen. Das teilt der Landesjungendring am Dienstag, 8. September, mit. Ermöglicht werden diese Reisen durch eine Vereinbarung über den Austausch von Jugendreisegruppen zwischen dem Deutschen Jugendherbergswerk, Landesverband Berlin, und dem Reisebüro der Freien Deutschen Jugend (FDJ) "Jugendtourist" am 1. September in Berlin. Für Jugendliche aus dem Bundesgebiet besteht diese Gelegenheit schon seit 1982 auf der Grundlage einer gemeinsamen Presseerklärung der FDJ und des Deutschen Bundesjugendringes. Daraufhin waren Verträge zwischen fünf Reisebüros in der Bundesrepublik, darunter das Deutsche Jugendherbergswerk und "Jugendtourist" geschlossen worden.

BUNDESREPUBLIK DEUTSCHLAND

"Der Begriff Jugendarbeitslosigkeit schliesst Jugendliche und junge Erwachsene bis zum Alter von 25 Jahren ein. Im Jahresdurchschnitt 1986 waren 506.280 junge Menschen bei den Arbeitsämtern registriert. Ihre Arbeitslosenquote lag mit rund 9.5% über der Gesamtquote. Junge Menschen, die sich bei der Berufsberatung eines Arbeitsamtes nur als Ausbildungsstellensuchende gemeldet haben, werden nicht als Arbeitslose geführt. Auch dies waren 1986 immerhin noch gut 80.000. Nicht als Arbeitslose gezählt werden ebenfalls jene rund 100.000 jungen Menschen unter 25 Jahren, die sich 1986 in den verschiedenen Massnahmen der Bundesanstalt für Arbeit (Berufsvorbereitungsmassnahmen, Arbeitsbeschaffungsmassnahmen, berufliche Bildungsmassnahmen) befanden und jene Jugendlichen, die resigniert haben und in keiner Statistik mehr erscheinen. Das tatsächliche Ausmass der Jugendarbeitslosigkeit ist also wesentlich höher, als es die amtlichen Zahlen erkennen lassen".

Dies ist ein Zitat aus einer sehr interessanten Studie "Die Zukunftsmöglichkeiten der jungen Generation - Ueberlegungen zur Jugendarbeitslosigkeit", EKD Texte Nr. 18. Bestellungen bei der EKD, Herrenhäuser Strasse 12, 3000 Hannover 1.

BRAZIL

The LWF Executive Committee meeting in Viborg (July 1987) decided that the next LWF Assembly will be organized upon an invitation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil in Curitiba, in January-February 1990. This means that the LWF Assembly, and hopefully also a new Pre-Assembly Youth Gathering, will take place in Brazil, this huge Latin American country

with our member church of 850.000 members. We will be witnesses of the hopes and sorrows of our sisters and brothers in Brazil and also the challenges of the Brazilian society today. Here are a few examples:

("Die Weltmission August 1987") - Over seven million children live in the streets of Brazilian towns. Many of them have no connection to their parents' house and they have to make their own living. This year the Catholic Church dedicated their "Campaign of brotherhood" to these "Meninos da Rua" (the street children)...

The news of the EYB (Nachrichten der EJB, Aug.Sept. 1987) reports on the case of a Lutheran pastor of Curitiba, Werner Fuchs, who was condemned at an Army trial because of his criticism against the army which has used "stolen land", taken away from the farmers already in 1956, for army purposes...

A worldwide campaign for the cause of the Brazilian Indios' constitutional rights has found an echo in Austria. The Catholic youth organization (der Katolische Jungschar Oesterreichs) collected 47.588 signatures which were handed over to the responsible person in the Brazilian parliament on July 20, 1987. (More information on the situation of the Indios can be obtained from our desk if you want to join this campaign)...

And finally an impressive poem from Brazil (in German) by Armino Trevisan, born in 1933:

Wo zwei oder mehr
in deinem Namen versammelt sind,
gib ihnen, Vater,
einen Funken deines Lebens.

Wo zwei oder mehr
in deinem Namen hungrig sind,
erwecke den Weizen
und entreisse den Händen
der Menschen
die Erde, die du ihnen gabst.

Wo zwei oder mehr
Kriege anzetteln,
lass das Gewicht
deiner Elefanten spüren.
Wo zwei oder mehr das Wort
zugunsten des Profits
manipulieren,
nimm ihnen
die goldenen Sonnenuntergänge
und gib ihnen den schwarzen Krebs.

Wo zwei oder mehr
sich die Hände geben,
tanz auch du mit ihnen,
so wild, dass sie meinen,
du seist ausser dir.

Wo zwei oder mehr
geboren werden,
komm auch du zur Welt
und stirb mit ihnen,
so dunkel,
dass andere zu ihnen laufen,
sie zu umarmen.

DENMARK

In Viborg, Denmark, the LWF Executive Committee met on July 8 - 15, 1987. Some of the highlights:

- Dr. Johannes Hanselman, Bishop of our member church in Bavaria, FRG, was elected new president of the LWF for the period up to the next Assembly. Congratulations and God's blessings!
- On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the LWF, the LWF General Secretary, Dr. Gunnar Staalsett, spoke about the necessity of reevangelization in Europe. He stated that in Europe one can observe strong signs of spiritual search among the youth. Our Lutheran churches have to answer to this search of the youth with the witness to the Christian faith.
- The Executive Committee affirmed "that it recognizes the value of the idea of holding a Youth Gathering prior to the Assembly and asks the Assembly Committee, in coordination and consultation with the LWF youth Desk, to discuss its scope and function in relation to other possible pre-Assembly meetings, and also that it present a recommendation on all possible pre-Assembly meetings to the next E.C. meeting, taking into account the cost factor" (Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting).

DEUTSCHE DEMOKRATISCHE REPUBLIK (epd)

DDR-Kirchenzeitung beklagt Benachteiligung junger Christen

Berlin - Die fortbestehende Benachteiligung junger Christen in der DDR-Gesellschaft ist Thema eines Kommentars der in Schwerin erscheinenden "Mecklenburgischen Kirchenzeitung". In der jüngsten Ausgabe des Wochenblattes heisst es, neben mancher friedenspolitischen Uebereinstimmung zwischen Staat und evangelischer Kirche gebe es noch eine Reihe von innenpolitischen Defiziten. Die Kirchenzeitung zitiert den Ost-Berliner Altbischof Albrecht Schönherr, der im vergangenen Jahr vor hohen Funktionären der DDR-CDU über Benachteiligungen geklagt hatte. So würden junge Christen, die im technischen und wissenschaftlichen Bereich arbeiten, trotz hoher Qualifikation seltener zu leitenden Positionen berufen. Auch in der Schule und in der Ausbildung sei, so Schönherr, "immer noch nicht ein-

deutig, dass kommunistische Erziehung keine Absage an den christlichen Glauben einschliesst". Auch werde Wehrdienstleistenden nicht selbstverständlich der Gottesdienstbesuch und der Besitz von Bibeln gestattet.

EL SALVADOR (Nachrichten des EJB, Aug/Sept. 1987)

In den Morgenstunden des 28. August 1987 erschütterte eine starke Explosion das von Lutheranern unterstützte Flüchtlingslager "Glaube und Hoffnung" in Nejapa. In der Kindertagesstätte, in der tagsüber fünfzig Kinder im Alter bis zu sechs Jahren untergebracht sind, war eine Bombe losgegangen. Da sich die Kinder nachts nicht in dem Gebäude befinden, wurde niemand verletzt. Die Kindertagesstätte, die erst vor anderthalb Jahren mit Hilfe der (lutherischen) Norwegischen Kirche gebaut worden war, wurde stark beschädigt. Nur etwa 150 Personen leben noch im Lager, vor allem Kinder. Viele dieser Kinder sind Waisen, die von Flüchtlingsfamilien adoptiert wurden. "Die Menschen sind sehr besorgt", sagt Phillip Anderson, der Vertreter des Lutherischen Weltbundes in El Salvador. "Sie fragen sich, was als nächstes geschieht. Hier haben sie sich sicher gefühlt. Wo können sie in Frieden leben, wenn nicht hier?"

LIBERIA (LYF)

Two events in Liberia:

The July Camp - The Lutheran Youth Fellowship of Liberia organized a youth camp in July of this year. With about 53 young people in attendance, the one week spent on the Totota Lutheran Mission was a wonderful time. Lectures were given on the following topics: Stewardship, Boy and Girl Relationship, The Sunday School Teachers, Leadership and Discipleship.

NLYF Holds First Workshop - The first workshop organized by the NLYF took place on September 18-20, 1987 in Fissebu, Lofa County. Under the dynamic and abled coordination of Alfred Geevofo, Vice President of the NLYF, the vice presidents of the LYF's in the Lofa District meet. Out of 14 groups invited, 10 participated in the workshop. The aim of the workshop was to help the vice presidents to realize their responsibilities in their respective groups and to help them deal with the problems and questions they are encountering. Each participant had the opportunity to report from His/her group.

POLAND

Ueber 600 Teilnehmer aus ganzem Lande nahmen teil an der Jahreskonferenz der Jugend der Evangelisch-Augsburgischen Kirche am 10. und 11. Oktober d.J. in Bielsko Biala (Teschenerland). Die Jahresversammlung der Evangelischen Jugend tagte unter der Losung "Ueber die Freiheit des

Christen". Zum Hauptthema der diesjährigen Versammlung gehörten die Pathologischen Erscheinungen der Polnischen Gesellschaft, vor allem Drogenabhängigkeit, eine neue Erscheinung auf dem Gebiet der Polnischen Religiosität - Satanismus - der in der jüngsten Zeit aus Amerika nach Polen kam und mehr als drei tausend Jugendliche beeinflusst hat, wie auch die Probleme der AIDS-Krankheit.

Die Jugendlichen haben auch diskutiert über die Bibelkunde und auch über die Religiöse Literatur. Die Konferenz endete mit einem Festgottesdienst in Bielsko Biala an der auch die Delegation der Evangelischen Kirche in Hessen und Nassau unter Leitung von Kirchenpräsident Helmut Spengler teilgenommen hat. Die Vertreter der Hessischen Kirche haben den Polnischen Oekumenischen Rat in der Zeit vom 7. bis 12. Oktober d.J. besucht.

SWEDEN (Swedish Church Newspaper)

Crossroads - a musical on how to choose the way

Crossroads is the name of a black suburb of Cape Town in South Africa. Crossroads also refers to the way of the Cross, the Passion of Jesus. But, above all it means an intersection - a place where you have to choose your way. This musical deals with all of this. The actors are 50 amateurs, whose main assets are their real and burning engagement. Anders Nygren (from the singing group "Fjedur") has contributed to this musical with texts, music, stage-management and also as a choir leader. A Swedish choir "Chorus" and also a South African choir called "Pula Choral" participated (Pula means rain, and rain has a strong symbolic meaning in South Africa, where you often speak about the "white draught" to describe the "whites" grip on South Africa). In the musical Christ is symbolized by a black man, who at the same time symbolizes Nelson Mandela. One scene depicts a funeral, which symbolizes the funeral of Steve Biko (who died in 1977 in a South African prison after having been tortured) and at the same time the funeral of all those who are victims of the apartheid system.

UNGARN (IDL 9/87)

Budapest - Wie in früheren Jahren üblich hat auch in diesem Jahr eine Jugendkonferenz im Ferienheim der Lutherischen Kirche in Ungarn stattgefunden. In Gyenesdias (Plattensee) trafen sich Jugenddelegierte aus dem ganzen Land. Die Konferenz war hauptsächlich biblischen und liturgischen Themen gewidmet. Meditiert wurde über Bonhoeffers Kirchenlied: "Von guten Mächten wunderbar geborgen." Daneben kamen auch Fragen zur Kirchenstruktur, Oekumene und Jugendarbeit zur Sprache. Wie in Gyenesdias verdeutlicht wurde, hofft man, dass in Zukunft die Teilnehmer dieser Konferenz aktiv in der Jugendarbeit und im Gottesdienst tätig sein können. Bisher wurde Jugendarbeit und Liturgiegestaltung fast ausschliesslich von Pfarrern und Vikaren(innen) gestaltet.

USA (ALC News)

Lutheran youth enthusiastically begin ministry as new organization

Indianapolis, Ind. - The youth organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) was born in a mood of enthusiasm and hope as the group held its constituting convention here July 16-19. In his opening greeting, Dr. Lowell G. Almen, secretary of the ELCA, expanded on the convention theme, "Christ: Our Foundation." "Building on such a foundation, we can move ahead, free and confident in the faith we teach, the hope we confess, and the promise we proclaim," he said.

The youth were reminded by several speakers that they are in ministry now and not just in the future. "You are not just the church of tomorrow; you are the church of today," said Karl Anderson, Seguin, Texas, convention chair, at the opening dinner. "My hope is for the mission of this organization - here in this room, at home where we live, and all over the world."

The youth expressed strong feelings that the organization not be exclusive. They decided to "actively seek and encourage membership" also among Asian, Black, Hispanic, and Native American communities.

The name of the organization became the subject of debate. The name chosen was Lutheran Youth Organization (LYO), the proposal of the Committee to Constitute the Youth Organization (CCYO). The CCYO was responsible for planning the convention. The convention elected a 13-member interim board to govern its organization and convene its first convention in San Antonio, Texas, in August 1988. The convention will be part of a larger national youth gathering there July 31-August 4. That event will be preceded by a multicultural youth leadership event at Texas Lutheran College, Seguin, Texas, July 28-31.

The Rev. Daryl D. Koenig, ALC staff person on the CCYO, during the final plenary session, assured the youth that with them, the church is in good hands. "You have debated. You have respected each other. You now own this constitution. You will make it and this organization come alive," he said. In his address to the group, ELCA Bishop Herbert W. Chilstrom spoke about the choices the youth will make regarding their Master, their mission in life, and their mate.

ZIMBABWE

Harare - The International Conference convened around the theme of Children, Repression and the Law of Apartheid in South Africa took place in Harare from September 24 - 27, 1987. The Zimbabwean Government cooperated in its organization and Prime Minister Robert Mugabe agreed to open the proceedings. The LWF Youth Desk was represented at this meeting by Rev. Enos Moyo and Mr. Andrew Sebata, both from Zimbabwe. Hopefully, the Youth Newsletter can bring a comprehensive report on this in the next issue.
